

A BIOGRAPHY

(REAL NAMES NOT GIVEN)

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Just a little anointing beforehand.



GRANDMOTHER WANG

A BIOGRAPHY.

CHAPTER I.—CHILDHOOD.

Place, Yu-yao ; Time, 1861.

“Grandma, I want to go to school and study.” The voice was earnest, wistful. The old woman busily picking over tea leaves only answered, “Run out, Little Sister, and play with Brother. See, he is flying a big dragon kite !” The winsome little face was clouded. “But, Grandma, I don’t understand all the preacher says, and why do we not have a kitchen god like our neighbors ; why don’t we have any tablet in our hall ? Think of my father’s spirit wandering about with no money. Why don’t we burn the paper money for him ? Why ? Why ? I want to study ! I want to read ! I want to learn !” Thus the usually merry child burst out. She was the idol of the house, the only granddaughter. Her mother had died when she was a baby. Ever since, the patient old mother had cared for the child as her own.

The woman thought now of the old ancestral home. How dear it had been to her! She was brought to it in her grand bridal chair so many many years ago. When the terrible long-haired rebels swept over the country the old home went down in flames. Her thought then was only for the safety of the little girl. When her eldest son, the child's father, was carried captive and literally frightened to death, Little Sister was her chief comfort. With so much she held dear gone, the message had come to her of the Christ who loved the little ones. She had accepted Him. But how could she let her little girl go? Besides, what was the use of a girl going to school? It was enough for her to cook and embroider her shoes.

To the child she said, "My precious, you already know the wonderful foreign letters. You can read the Bible so nicely to me."

"But," said Little Sister, "so often I only say sounds. I don't understand their meaning. When I read 'liang' how can I tell whether it means 'two' or 'good' or 'ounce' or 'light?' I want to read our own characters. They would be clear and open a new world to me."

Day by day the eager longing grew in the heart of the child. Sometimes she lay awake at night and the tears would come. Often she would stifle the sobs. The old woman listening would say, "No, no, I can not let her go."

So the years went by. The child was fast growing into a woman. She could no longer run and play on the village street. She must do up her hair in a funny knob just over one ear. Worst of all, when she went to church she must needs don a horrid black skirt. How she hated that skirt! It was such a nuisance and always getting in her way.

Then it was whispered about: "We must be finding a husband for our girl." They were about to settle on a neighboring young man. Little Sister openly rebelled. "I will not marry him!" she said. In this emergency the honored pastor of the village church was called in to exhort her on the subject. But, strange to say, Mr. Bao could sympathize with young hearts. "We Christians do not force a girl to marry against her will," he said.

"What!" said grandmother, "Let a mere girl decide such a question! Who in the world ever heard of such an idea as that?"

Little Sister wept and wailed.

"Let me go to Ningpo to school."

"But Ningpo is so far away."

"Then let me go to Hangchow."

"Hangchow! That is still farther away."

At last her uncle joined the plea, "Let her go, Mother."

"I am a selfish old woman," she thought, as she listened to the sobs that night, "I will let her go."

Gladly, joyously, on one side; bravely, patiently, on the other; preparations were made for the girl's flitting.

Out in the courtyard the goldfish were splashing the water up into the sunshine. In the house a feast was spread. Little Sister, with radiant face, in crimson and gold embroidered gown, was eating her last meal at home. The old grandmother followed to the boat which was to take the student to the land of her dreams. She watched until it vanished from sight. Then she returned to her cold barren walls and mud floors. Her sunshine had gone.

CHAPTER II.

AT SCHOOL IN THE CITY OF THE PEACEFUL WAVE.—1870-1872.

The new girls were talking in excited groups. "I never have taken a bath in my life," said one little girl. "I know it will make me sick." "I've bathed in the summer time," said another, "but now it is cold, I think it's just cruel." "Let's not do it," they whispered, "we can just pretend we bathe."

Little Me-lee's bath time came and went. The foreign teacher was looking about. "Me-lee, have you taken your bath?" "Yes," lied Me-lee. "Why are your arms so dirty? Didn't you have any soap?" Me-lee faltered. Miss Lew, seeing the look on her face, said, "Me-lee, you have not taken a bath at all. If you are not willing to obey the rules of the school, I shall have to send you home." "O! I will obey," whimpered Me-lee. "Very well, I will go with you and see that you do." O! the terror of it. Me-lee was white and trembling. The tears rained down her face as for the first time in her short life she stepped into a bath tub. "O, Miss Lew," she begged, "please don't send me home. If you do, my mother will sell

me to be a slave girl." "Cross old thing!" the girls whispered, but they took their baths.

Where is Little Sister? See that girl with such a proud little air? That is she, only now we call her An-sen. She is getting used to school ways. The hardest thing at first was to go to bed at nine o'clock and get up at six in the morning. At home she stayed up as long as Grandmother did, and arose just when she pleased. Often the girls talked long after they went to bed. But the foreign teacher was always catching them at it. She didn't allow them to study aloud. How could they ever learn their lessons if they didn't shout them aloud?

One day the little girls were playing a game of their own, "Winding the screw." Miss Lew stepped into the room. They started to run like rats to their holes, but she clapped her hands and said, "How lovely! Please do it again." The foreign teacher wasn't so bad after all. One day she gave the little ones two white mice to keep as pets. The very first night the cage was hung where the cold wind blew upon it. In the morning the mice were dead. The children were sad and frightened. "Well, well," said Miss Lew, "we will have to have a funeral."

The woeful faces chirked up. The mice were wrapped in soft white cotton and placed in a box. They marched out into the garden, dug a hole and placed the coffin in it. "Teacher, may we weep?" "Yes." So they wept with true Oriental hired mourner wails. "Won't you weep, too, Miss Lew?" "All right," she said, and joined the wails. Did ever such howls of merriment disgrace a funeral? Even big An-sen enjoyed the fun. It was a disappointment that she belonged with the primary children. Then, too, all her work was in the Romanized. She did so want to learn the Chinese characters. After a long time she plucked up courage and asked if she might not study Wen-li. The teachers thought it useless. What would a girl already seventeen ever accomplish in Wen-li? But finally they let her study a famous little book, "The Three Character Classic," and some Bible stories, in the character.

"A letter for you, An-sen!" She grasped it eagerly. Yes, it was from her cousin at school in Hangchow. A very polite formal little letter it was. Another missive dropped out, addressed to her school mate We-in. An-sen wrote to her cousin, "Do not send letters to me for other girls. It is against the rules." A

week later another letter came to her. It was not her cousin's writing. She opened it. It was an effusive love letter to We-in. An-sen frowned as she handed the letter over. "You know it is not nice to get such letters." We-in only laughed. Still the letters kept coming. At last Miss Lew called her up. "Whom do you have in Hangchow?" "My cousin." "Why do you get so many letters from him?" What should she say? "I don't care to get the letters," she said. "Write to Hangchow and tell him not to send any more letters to me."

But Miss Lew was not satisfied. "Whom is this letter from?" she asked. "You may open it and see." "An-sen is a tattle tale," said We-in to the other girls. "She is the teacher's pet and tells every thing she knows. I'm not going to speak to her any more."

Less than three years in school, when a message came that Grandmother was very ill. An-sen knew her school days were over, and she had learned so little! Sorrowfully she packed up her belongings. The dear old woman who had been a mother to her needed her sorely and she must go.

CHAPTER III.

WOULD IT BE HEAVEN BELOW?

“Twenty years old and not married yet!” Really it was getting serious. Many young men had been suggested. This one from the east and that one from the west, but each in turn Miss An-sen had refused. She said she wanted the Heavenly Father to choose for her. Now a letter had come from an old-time friend in Hangchow. A fine young man in his congregation was looking for a wife. The young man, Wang by name, had taken training in the foreign hospital and was highly spoken of as a young physician of promise. He had no people and no means, but if Miss An-sen would consider him Pastor Chang felt sure it would be a fine match. Mr. Wang, by the way, was a tall, handsome fellow of some thirty years.

Her uncle read the letter to An-sen. She only looked down at her hands and said nothing. Grandmother made objections. “Hangchow is too far away. I will never see her again. She must marry and live by my side.” Still An-sen said nothing, “Mother” whispered the uncle “she wants this man. We better let her

have her way. She always gets it anyway, and it really seems a fine opportunity." So it was decided. An-sen sought the solitude of her own room. "They say he is a good man; I don't care if he is poor, I can help him save money. I believe it is the Heavenly Father's choice for me."

She had never thought much about her face before but now she studied her mirror. "They say he is handsome. Perhaps he will not like me; We-in says I am a homely girl. Ah ya! What a flat little nose I have to be sure! Look at my high cheek bones and my great mouth! I can hardly shut my lips over my teeth." Tears were near the surface. She was not laughing and so of course she could not see the dimples come and go; nor see how engagingly funny the little nose wrinkled up; nor yet realize after all how very firmly the lips did close over the fine if prominent teeth.

Busy days followed. The engagement papers were passed and in due time the trousseau money came from the groom-to-be. Very carefully they planned. An-sen must have trunks and shoes, garments, comforts, bridal jewelry. What lessons in economy she learned working with Grandmother. The "good day" drew near.

Very seriously An-sen said good-bye to the old home and friends and started on her long journey. She would meet her husband for the first time on her wedding day. Faith and love beckoned her on even though she had not seen.

She was going to the city of Heaven Below. Would it be a heaven below for her?

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE CRUCIBLE.

The Wangs were prospering. They had moved into a large house on the Precious Pearl Street, then again into a still larger one on the Great Street. As his friends predicted the handsome dashing Dr. Wang was making good. His foreign medicines were in great demand. His opium refuge was well patronized. Mrs. Wang was a busy woman with her little flock of children. One, two, three little girls had come to them. They decided to adopt a boy. Later a boy of their own came, then another girl. They were a happy well-ordered family. When they entered church on Sunday as was their wont, many admiring glances followed those six pretty, well-dressed little steps.

They kept a whole retinue of servants which Mrs. Wang managed with admirable tact. A private tutor taught in the home. The mother was determined her daughters should have the education she had missed. She herself studied whenever she could find time. Long ago her husband had come to lean on her splendid

judgment. They had a beautiful garden with flowers, shrubs, and birds. Many a heathen neighbor was led to inquire further into the Gospel message because of the spirit of love which pervaded the home.

Suddenly a cloud the size of a man's hand appeared. Mrs. Wang was not well. Did she only imagine it or was her husband less kind and considerate than of old? A puny baby came to the home. The mother was too weak and sick to care for the child. The father was busy. The servants tried to feed him rice but somehow the baby died. It was Mrs. Wang's first sorrow. She wept bitterly, "Me-lin's papa," she said, "what did you do to keep the baby from dying?" There was no answer. It was long before she could get her strength. She was anxious. What was the trouble?

A year later a baby girl came and starved to death. A third year and still another baby came and went to join her sister and the great army of unwanted baby girls. Anxiety was weighing Mrs. Wang down. She was cross too and irritable. Why was she letting anger and the green monster jealousy dry up the very fountains of her life? Why was her husband so moody? What meant those brown stains on

his thumb and fore finger? O! if she could only die! How long must she keep up this agony of bearing and losing children? Her ninth baby came. She turned her face to the wall in hopeless despair. "Let him die" she said, "he will any way." But Dr. Wang bestirred himself. A nurse was found. The boy lived.

For a time life was more endurable. Both parents were very proud of the handsome child so like his father. But the sunshine did not last long. Things went from bad to worse. Piece by piece furniture went to the pawn shop. Beautiful satin fur-lined garments disappeared to fill the need of nine hungry mouths.

One day a woman came to the house. She was homely and old. Years ago—ages it seemed—she had come to the opium refuge to be cured of the opium habit. Mrs. Wang had welcomed her then as a sister in distress. Now it was different. She had come to stay. She, the temptress, was now one of the family, the small wife.

First the blow fell from the church. Dr. Wang was expelled. Neither opium-smoking nor polygamy was allowed there. As if that were not enough the woman's husband took up the matter. Out on the street where all could see, Dr. Wang, the gay debonair gentleman, Dr. Wang, the scholar, physician, philanthropist,

was publicly flogged. Mrs. Wang hid her face for very shame. There was no sweetness of revenge for her. The very dregs of the bitter cup for the proud woman was that every one should know, even the stupid foreigners. Then, too, she loved her husband. She had come to him a willing bride with trembling maiden love and hope. She had not been disappointed. From the first glimpse of him her heart had swelled with love and pride. His language had become her language ; his customs, her customs ; his people, her people ; his God, her God.

Many a poor Chinese woman has stoically endured a similar fate. But most of them are prepared and brutalized by long years of hard rough treatment. Not so with Mrs. Wang. She had been loved and petted all her life. She had cultivated the fine graces of love, sympathy, and tenderness. Do not blame her too much that she stormed, she raved, she tore her hair. She would have no more of the foreigners' religion. She had prayed and prayed to the Heavenly Father and He had not answered her prayer. She could not stand her lot. She would end it all by killin ; herself.

CHAPTER V.

A VESSEL MEET FOR THE MASTER'S USE.

Just a humble, homely common Chinese woman. You might pass her by without a second notice. Yet perhaps there is not a woman more widely loved and honored in all the great city of Hangchow than dear old Grandmother Wang. She has had many sorrows since the first one when her baby died, starved to death. She has come a long, long way from the time when she gave up her religion and tried to take her own life.

There were many friends who helped her in her distress. Mrs. Wang remembers with gratitude her cousin who cheered her with offers of financial assistance for her children. He obtained employment for her son and sent the youngest daughter to boarding school.

With especial love and gratitude she remembers Mrs. Lowe. Mrs. Lowe did not preach at her. She came with tears of sympathy. Mrs. Wang forgot that she was a foreigner. She only knew she had found a friend who understood.

Gradually she was won back. The sorrowing, pitying, loving Savior became a new reality in her life. There were many problems to be solved. There were seven children to be cared for and the adopted boy proved to be deficient.

When at last her husband died from the effects of his dissipations there was still that other woman, who thought she had a right to share in the fortunes of the house of Wang.

As soon as they were old enough her four daughters each taught in mission schools. They were lovely in character as well as beautiful in face. It was no sinecure to find just the right husbands for them—not to speak of the mothers-in-law. Her cousin claimed the youngest for his son but Mrs. Wang would not consent to this.

Will Mrs. Wang ever forget that first trip with Mrs. Lowe? They went out into the country regions to preach the Gospel. How unworthy she felt herself, but she was willing to do her best. How the people crowded about them! Sometimes they were fairly lifted off their feet by the throngs. Often Mrs. Lowe would get up on a chair so that the instinct of curiosity should be satisfied by a good look at the strange foreign woman.

Could she eat? Did she sleep? Was she really like themselves? Why in the world didn't she ever comb her hair? Mrs. Wang could see the funny side of things. How she laughed one day when Mrs. Lowe announced that she could not sleep because the mosquitoes sang hymns in her ears all night. Another time Mrs. Lowe inadvertently stepped on a man's toe. Mortified and apologetic she used the first Chinese words that came to mind, "Never mind, never mind. It's no matter." "Would you think it no matter," Mrs. Wang asked, "if some one stepped on your toe?" They were out in the spring time when all nature was fresh and green. Mrs. Wang felt so glad and happy to be helping in the great work of making the Gospel known. The first fresh fruits were just getting ripe. She gathered a quantity to take home to her children. Trouble awaited her there. Her youngest, now a boy of ten, was stricken with fever and died soon after his mother reached home. It was a heavy sorrow but there was no bitterness in it. She knew her boy was safe in the arms of Jesus. Since that time she has travelled far and wide, up and down, telling the Good News. Are people in sorrow or trouble? They turn instinctively to Grandmother Wang. Are they glad and happy? She also bubbles over with fun

and merriment. Are there quarrels to be settled? What intermediary so good as Mrs. Wang? Do you need advice? You listen to her words of wisdom and go forward.

It was not easy to rear a houseful of children alone. She has many times had her difficulties. Her son wandered off and brought home a strange wife with no love nor care for the mother and her God. Soon there was trouble. The son sided with his wife as sons sometimes do in spite of Confucius. Poor Mrs. Wang was told they would buy her no coffin. "I don't care what you do with my old body when I have left it," she said, "throw it to the dogs if you like." Young Mr. Wang founp himself in difficulty. In his position in the post-office he must give bond. His brothers-in-law resenting his treatment of the mother refused to remain longer on his bond. In his dilemma he came to his mother to intercede. At first she said "No," but then, "after all he is my son." The bond was secured. Mrs. Wang does not now lack in filial devotion from her son and daughter-in-law now won to Christ. Her host of children and grandchildren all rise up to call her blessed. Her spirit is a jewel which is still being cut and polished. Some day it will be found to be perfect.

Then it will be released from its house of clay and will shine as the stars forever and ever. Meanwhile, awaiting the house of clay, there stands safe and secure, with all the burial robes complete, a handsome Chinese coffin.

